WORKS IN PROGRESS

VOLUME 9, NO. 7 | THURSTON COUNTY RAINBOW COALITION | NOVEMBER 1998

"... tell the truth no matter what, and struggle with such principle that you never allow yourself to disrespect your opponent's humanity. . .you remain linked to her or him." Joy James

Out Front Labor Coalition

Matthew Shepard - What We Can Do

Soph Davenport

On Friday, October 16th, 1998 I stood in Sylvester Park, along with a couple hundred other folk, to listen and speak about how the recent murder of Matthew Shepard in Wyoming has affected the (queer) communities here in Olympia and at the Evergreen campus. I cannot convey all that was said among the many folks who got up to speak, or turned to their neighbors to light a candle, or huddled together as the crowd dispersed and the night chill set in. But towards the end of the evening, one person got up and said no one had really said what we can do in response to this horrific tragedy which has sparked emotions not only in Wyoming but all across the country. I feel a lot of great suggestions were put forth, however, and a few more mentioned among friends, so I've repeated them here as a resource for whoever wants a few (out of many) constructive ways to reduce the number of deaths like Matthew Shepard's.

Keep the dialogue going. Focus whatever fears, anger and frustration you may have, and forge them into a source of activism.

Love one another, listen to one another, treat one another with respect. Some (distant) relatives of Matthew Shepard, who spoke at the gathering, noted that Matthew was harassed for being a small-statured guy as much as anything else. Violence occurs across many spectrums of difference. This is not just a queer issue, or a race issue, or a gender issue, a class issue or a personal issue. Violence is a community issue. An attack on one sends vibrations through the whole web of life.

Learn to defend yourself. For women here in Olympia, an excellent resource is F.I.S.T., the Feminists In Self-defense Training. (They can be reached at 438-0288). I've taken their basic course, which met one night a week for six weeks. Not only did I learn techniques for fending off attackers, I learned to recognize my own boundaries and to communicate them. Even yoga, stretching or any sort of quasi-regular exercise help to keep us in tune with our bodies and to vent energy we may have from our positive and negative experiences-- great tools for self-care and self-defense.

Be active in your communities. I have a job, am part of a cohousing group, live with four other women, go to the Co-op and the Olympia Film society, attend classes, and live within walking distance of a park and elementary school. I am a member of all these communities. I can't be active in all of them, but I do get chances to meet people, find out about different events, make friends and become acquainted with familiar faces. By knowing my neighbors, by investing in relationships with people who live in Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater I broaden the pool of folks I can turn to if I need help, as well as offer a hand to those in need.

Attend School Board meetings. This idea came up at the end of the gathering, when one person mentioned that while we have Stonewall Youth (705-2738) in our area to address some of queer youth needs, it's hateful attitudes in general that can lead to violence. I don't have kids of my own, but parents and students need the support and insight that we as community members can offer. I just learned this past week that most of us learn our moral and ethical values by the time we're 12 or 13. If we want to reduce violence among our youth, we need to step forward and demonstrate tolerance, accepting differences, working through conflict, and genuine interest in the future of this community through the children we raise. I am a role model for the kids in my neighborhood just by living here. I can show I care by learning more about what the schools in my neighborhood are doing, and what I can do to help them achieve their goals of quality education for young people. Call the Olympia School District at 753-8850 to find out when they're meeting, or cruise their website at www.kids.osd.wednet.edu to learn more about your local school's activities.

Stand up for what you believe in. It's tough to be up front. I went to a movie theater recently and saw a man hitting a young boy across the face in the parking lot. I yelled at him to stop, to cool down. He stopped hitting the boy but continued to yell at him. When we were all standing in line, I approached him and said, "I saw what you did. I just thought you might want to consider thinking about what you are doing before it happens again." The guy looked me in the eye and said "Thank you. I will." (I'm pretty sure he meant it.) He could have told me off, proclaimed that I had no right to tell him how to raise his kids, and in some ways he would have been right. At the same time, I have a responsibility to speak out when I see something I believe is wrong. The most respectful thing I can do for someone, whether they're my best friend or a complete stranger, is to be honest and direct. If I can't trust someone with my genuine feelings and opinions, how can we trust each other to build a better community?

Voice your opinion to our elected officials. With the internet, telephone, faxes, not to mention the State Capitol, we have many opportunities to make a lot of noticeable noise. Take advantage of them. Working Assets Long Distance (1-800-788-0898) allows me to call my elected officials anytime, toll-free, all the way to D.C. For some it's even easier to hop on the web and tap out an email. Let our State and Congressional reps know!:

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asklinda@mail.house.gov

State Leg. Sen. Karen Fraser
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fraser_ka@leg.wa.gov

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in Olympia 786-7940
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Rep. Cathy Wolfe
in Olympia 786-7992
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You can also check their voting records at www.leg.wa.gov. We all have the right to sit in on our State Legislature. As they go into session this year, take an hour or so to hear how the process goes. I know many people who are skeptical about the political process, but it is an established route for change in this country. Don't trash it 'til you've tried it.

Keep the dialogue going. Focus whatever fears, anger and frustration you may have, and forge them into a source of activism. You are not alone -- I saw hundreds of people who are concerned about our communities, and I know of thousands more. We can make a difference, but it takes time and energy, trust and maybe some reluctant faith in humanity. No matter what religion, no matter what belief, we each recognize some indescribable spark in each other-- we are, after all, the same species. Remember who we are, dream of who we can become.

"Leave it better than we found it." (said most recently to me by Mike Sullivan, Union Sheet Metal Worker) ●

Working People's Follow-up on What *The Olympian* Didn't Cover

This is the introduction to a new feature of Works In Progress that requires your critical thought and active participation. It is conceived to be an ongoing analysis and criticism of The Olympian and other mainstream corporate media. As you read their stories, figure out what they are leaving out and then do some follow-up and send the results to WIP. It may be a local tie-in to a national story or an ignored side to an issue. Use your race and gender consciousness, your political, economical, and cultural understanding to correct their "oversight."

What About Jobs?

by Pat Tassoni

The Story: October 1st, *The Olympian* begins a series of articles profiling the new garbage/recycling containers for City of Olympia residents. They mentioned how to keep garbage odor down and the new size of the receptacles. The only real mention of the workers was whether or not they liked the new containers.

The Follow-up: According to the Olympia City Personnel, there are at least two less full time positions in the Garbage/Recycling/Yard Waste Collection section of the Public Works Department since last year.

Scott Schimelfenig of that section says over the past four years their section has lost seven employees due to attrition or to employees moving to other sections or departments. They have not continued some of these positions, in effect, eliminating them without laying off anyone.

The fewer permanent positions is currently offset by an unusual amount of temporary workers. As the section determines the exact need of the labor and equipment in "effeciencizing" the new containers, they expect to be down to half of the current temporary workers. Still though, Schimelfenig says there was no personnel change due to the change over to the new containers.

The Olympian did not mention that job loss is part of the new garbage/recycling program which the city has been working on for a year and a half.

WORKS IN PROGRESS

Works In Progress is a community newspaper sponsored by the Thurston County Rainbow Coalition. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Rainbow Coalition or the Workers In Progress and are solely those of the authors.

Submissions:

Correspondence, articles, art, and photographs are always welcome. Please, when possible, put articles on a 3.5" IBM-compatible disk (text preferred). Artwork and photos should be camera-ready/black & white.

WIP reserves the right to publish in whole or part all submissions. For editing purposes, please enclose your phone number. Articles may be reprinted. Please cite source.

If you don't see your issue being covered in Works In Progress, it's because you aren't writing about it! (Or aren't finding someone else to cover it!)

Send submissions to Works In Progress, PO Box 295, Olympia, WA 98507-0295, wip@ olywa.net

Back Issues:

A complete set of back issues is located in the library of Liberation Cafe along with a chrono-index. Back issues are also available in the Olympia Timberland Library. WIP is being archived on microfilm by the UW Library.

WORKERS IN PROGRESS

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Teresa Jennings	Tara Perkins
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Margaret Love	Sylvia Smith
Evelyn Montague	Pat Tassoni
Ohana	Dave Zink

Mission Statement:

"Our aim is to confront injustice and encourage a participatory democracy based on economic, social, and environmental justice. Works In Progress is dedicated to providing a voice for those most affected by the exclusionary and unfair practices that seek to silence the oppressed."

Anti-Discrimination Clause:

We will collectively endeavor to be sensitive and respectful to all those oppressed in this society, and their issues. However, if and when we should make a mistake in this regard, we expect to acknowledge it and to express regret for injury or insult given.

Governing Tool:

The following statement will become part of the Editorial Policy and will be the governing tool for the Anti-Discrimination Clause: *WIP will make every effort to work with the contributor of material considered by WIP to be offensive in order to reach a mutually agreed upon resolution, but WIP reserves the right as a last resort to edit or not print submitted material.*

WIP Schedule

Submission Deadline:

Friday, Nov. 20th

6pm at Liberation Cafe

Proofreading Meeting

Tuesday, Nov. 24th
7pm at Liberation Cafe

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Fixed and Confused

by Eric Chase

A play by Bill Bradley

Actor/playwright Bill Bradley from Portland, Oregon will be performing his one man play at the Midnight Sun, Saturday, November 21st at 7pm. Bradley's play, "Fixed and Confused: Social Work in Animal Shelters or: Dairy Farming in a Lactose-Intolerant World deals with serious subjects in a respectful yet humorous way. Anodyne Magazine calls him profound, "navigating with the flow of a true storyteller". Bradley describes himself as "an ordinary, working-class, postmodern, permaculture, Oregonian, eco-queer, revolutionary, feminist, witch comic of not very dark color".

What does this all mean? Well, Bradley confronts these serious topics from a perspective that only a queer standup comic that has performed at biker bars and military bases can. This is an "extraordinarily fictionalized account" of his life. Bradley's play is about growing up in a military family, coming out as queer in high school, struggling with the concept of work, joining the I.W.W., counseling runaway teens, being homeless and working on a communal animal farm. He focuses on the never ending search for security and the constant tests of integrity while just trying to survive.

The 29 year old Bradley creates quirky images of "his" life and weaves together messages of hope and humor throughout. Working with Bradley is director Stephanie Mulligan, 20 year veteran of professional theater, who helped create the play's interwoven stand-up comedy and theater act style. The play ends up working well in combining the seriousness of the postmodern age with the entertainment and humor needed to make sense and survive through it all.

Both Bill Bradley and Stephanie Mulligan are members of the Artists and Entertainment Workers Union, I.U. 630 of the I.W.W. A portion of the proceeds will benefit the Laughing Horse Bookstore in Portland. Laughing Horse, a radical bookstore collective, was recently burglarized and much of its stock stolen.

The Capitol Theater in Downtown Olympia

Olympia FILM SOCIETY

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"If you are fed up with corporate media, you need to rebuild connections; and alternatives do exist for you to get involved in."

– Tim Wise

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NOVEMBER 1998

Soldiers Killing in War

Killing Response Stages

1 **Concern about being able to kill**

2 **Killing event**

3 **Exhilaration stage (combat high)**

4 **Remorse and shame : "killer's remorse is real, it is common, it is intense, and it is something that must be dealt with for the rest of one's life."**

5 **Rationalize and acceptance: what was done "was necessary and right."**

6 **Post-traumatic Stress Disorder develops when the rationalization fails.**

As many as 1.5 million Vietnam Vets suffer post-traumatic stress disorder. They are four times more likely to be divorced or separated, represent a large portion of the homeless population and are increasingly more likely to commit suicide.

Source: ***On Killing*** **by Lt. Col. Dave Grossman**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 **1890**- Clause in Mississippi's new constitution restricts black suffrage to those who can read and interpret U.S. Constitution	**2** **1963**- Military coup in S Vietnam government, Pres. Diem murdered **1997** - Iraq bars American weapons experts from entering country	**3** **1997** - Supreme Court rejects a challenge to California's Proposition 209 that repealed affirmative action in state and local government	**4** **1995** - Yitzhak Rabin is assassinated **1997** - Olympia rejects library bond again, Aaron Owada defeats Thelma Jackson	**5** **1993** - Larry Rogers is stabbed in Lacey **1916** - The Everett massacre; At least six Wobblies are killed	**6** **1913**- India: Gandhi arrested by British troops **1996** - Clinton is elected to another four years; Adam Smith defeats Randy Tate	**7** **1841**- Slave revolt on the Creole en route to New Orleans sails ship to Bahamas **1940**- "Galloping Gertie" collapses
8 **1995** - National Research Council claims salmon raised in hatcheries will help push naturally spawning salmon species to extinction	**9** **1938**- "Crystal Night" **1813**- Major General Andrew Jackson destroys the Native village of Talladega, killing more than 500	**10** **1805**- Osage sign treaty ceding land to US gov. and are moved to OK **1917**- 41 suffragists are arrested for picketing the White House	**11** **1997** - Drug Enforcement Admin. says Oregon doctors who take part in assisted suicides risk losing licenses to write prescriptions	**12** **1908**- Germany: 302 miners entombed in Hamm explosion **1775**- Gen. Washington forbids enlistment of African-Americans	**13** **1997** - South Sound Mental Health and Homes First! both receive $5,000 grants from the Seattle-based L.I.H.I.	**14** **1997**- W. Washington Episcopalians approve resolution that homosexuality is morally neutral and supports ordaining gay/lesbians
15 **1828**- Creeks sign a treaty ceding their lands to the US gov. **1997** - Justice Dept. reports violent crime in 1996 dropped 10%	**16** **1900**- Black youth, accused of murder, burns at stake in Colorado	**17** **1997** - Gunmen open fire at Luxor's Hatshepsut Temple in Egypt: 58 foreign tourist, 4 Egyptians and 6 gunmen are killed	**18** **1996** - Feds find no trace of E. coli bacteria at Odwalla's plant **1997** - The Bread & Roses Drop-in Center reopens	**19** **1996** - Salvation Army temporary agrees to admit homeless men barred for not complying with shelter's "self-help" rules	**20** **1995** - State trooper who delayed couple en route to abortion appointment is fired after internal WA State Patrol investigation	**21** **1997** - ACLU asks Lacey to rescind proclamation of Nov 23-30 as Bible Week, reimburse all city costs to prepare proclamation
22 **1909** - NY female garment workers strike **1916**- Jack London, who suffered from depression, died of taking an excess of morphine	**23** **1995** - Report in *Journal Science* states 1/93 HIV figures for men ages 27 to 39: 1 in 92 infected, 1 in 33 African-american men	**24** **1995** - Ireland voters legalize divorce **1997** - INS arrests 100 Sherwood Forest Farms employees in Thurston and Lewis Co.s	**25** **1997** - U.S. Dept of Energy studies show radioactive wastes underground storage tanks have reached aquifer below the reservation	**26** **1997** - State Supreme Court rules police have latitude in keeping records secret/can keep all files on unsolved crimes under wraps	**27** **1937**- ILGWU musical Pins and Needles opens. Critics are impressed by the song "Sing Me a Song of Social Significance."	**28** **1997** - Study in *Journal Science* :greenhouse gases threaten warm surface waters that keep Europe's climate mild
29 **1864** - US troops massacre Cheyennes in Sand Creek, CO **1975** - Handicapped children gain federal right to free education	**30** **1997** - Swedish climate scientist claims greenhouse gases need to be reduced beyond the United States proposal of 1990 levels	**"We each come to understand situations with a new perspective when we listen to people experiences different from our own."** **Margo Adair**				

OCTOBER

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Along the Color Line

The Politics of Black Culture

Dr. Manning Marable

To understand the history and consciousness of African-American people, you must first understand our culture. When people experience systematic oppression, their political aspirations and hopes for a better life are reflected with culture, the arts, and spirituality.

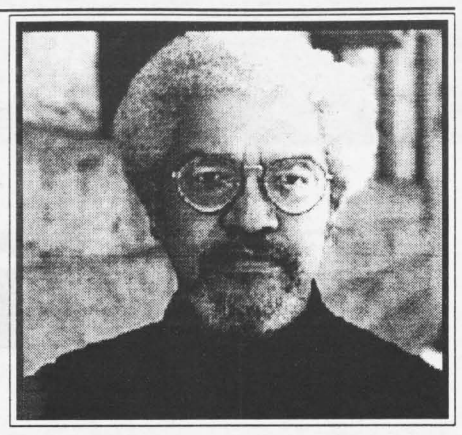
Through Culture, people who have experienced oppression can find their won voice.

Embedded in the blues, for instance, is a critique of the political economy of race and class grounded in the exploitation of the Deep South. Old school hip-hop artists like Grandmaster Flash presented a sharp critique of the racialized effects of urban deindustrialization, police brutality and poverty in their music. Moreover, the figure of the politician in black political culture was constructed largely outside of the institutions of electoral politics. Roles of leadership evolved from cultural institutions, primarily but not exclusively the black church. Over several generations black leaders developed a style of charismatic and frequently autocratic politics which was, in many ways, like a "performance." The audience, for whom the performance was theoretically intended, is only an observer to the main action. The actors or artists who dominate the stage want the audience to enjoy the show, to be entertained and maybe even inspired. The agenda or script which defines the general events and outcomes is determined by the few, not the many. As W.E.B. DuBois once observed, "all art is propaganda and must ever be."

In the early years of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Du Bois conceived of a way to use performance as a means to advance black interests. In 1911, he wrote a pageant, "The Star of Ethiopia," which celebrated African-American culture and history. It was first performed in New York City in 1913, to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. Hundreds of black performers in colorful costumes participated in the artistic enterprise, and over 14,000 people attended the pageant's four stagings. "The Star of Ethiopia" was later performed before six thousand people in Washington D.C. in 1915, and a decade later at the Hollywood Bowl, with the proceeds going to the Los Angeles branch of the NAACP. Du Bois characterized the pageant as something "the people want and long for. This is the gown and paraphernalia in which the message of education and reasonable race pride can deck itself."

In a remarkable passage, Du Bois describes the overwhelming emotions he felt in witnessing thousands of black folk celebrating in unison their music, culture and racial solidarity: "Suddenly a great new spirit seemed born. The Thing that you have exorcised becomes a living, mighty, moving spirit. It sweeps on and you hang trembling to its skirts. Nothing can stop it. It is. It will. Wonderfully, irresistibly the dream comes true. You feel no exaltation, you feel no personal merit. It is not yours. It is its own. You have simply called it, and it comes." Despite his enthusiasm, Du Bois never saw this public cultural event as a substitute for politics, but only a means to motivate and inspire.

Through culture, people who have experienced oppression can find their own voice. The performing arts, poetry, music, and other forms of cultural expression give our children a sense of connectedness with their heritage. Novelists and essayists like James Baldwin, Alice Walker, Amiri Baraka, Richard Wright, Toni Morrison and Zora Neal Hurston are and were always political. When we expand the boundaries of our collective imaginations, we begin to realize our full potential as a people. We must support and finance our own creative artists, but with the objective of fostering greater democratic access and participation by all classes and sectors of the black community. Through black culture, we may make strengthen out political struggle.



Dr. Manning Marable is Professor of History and Director of the Institute for Research in African-American Studies at Columbia University, New York City. "Along the Color Line" is distributed free of charge and regularly appears in over 325 black and progressive publications worldwide. ●

Colleges Increasingly Offering Financial Aid to the Rich

Claudia M. Milian Arias

Richie Rich currently has more chance of going to a good college than Raggedy Ann.

According to a recent report in the New York Times, the nation's elite colleges and universities --such as Harvard, Princeton, Vassar and Oberlin -- are largely abandoning the concept of financial need when granting financial aid. They now outbid each other to offer more scholarship money to top students, even if their families do not need this handout.

Meanwhile, the best education in the country is less and less accessible to bright but financially needy applicants. According to Morton Schapiro, economics professor at the University of Southern California and co-author of "The Student Aid Game" (Princeton University Press, 1997), these students are increasingly restricted to community colleges and, in certain instances, are completely shut out of four-year public institutions.

What is at issue here is not the quality of these community or public institutions. Rather, it is the way elite colleges, a key to the American Dream, make multiculturalist claims, but open their doors primarily to those with greater economic advantage.

These new economic preferences favoring the rich provide an ironic twist on the affirmative-action debate at a time when affirmative action is widely regarded as a divisive racial practice that supposedly excludes gifted white students. Some people believe that affirmative action is a free admissions ticket for unqualified people of color. Educational welfare for the rich, however, will make our most prestigious schools inaccessible to all but the smartest and wealthiest among us.

This practice by colleges of giving financial aid to the already well-off demonstrates that the assault on affirmative action is often based on false assertions. A major claim of opponents of affirmative action has been that this a free country full of access and opportunity and that competence, qualifications, and merit prevail when you seek admission to a college or apply for a job.

As academia privileges the financially prosperous, it becomes clearer that there are deep-seated inequalities existing in this country along class lines.

Claudia M. Milian Arias is a doctoral student in the American Civilization department at Brown University. Copyright 1998, Claudia M. Milian Arias. Re-print or electronic distribution without permission is prohibited. Call the Progressive Media Project for information, 608-257-4626. ●

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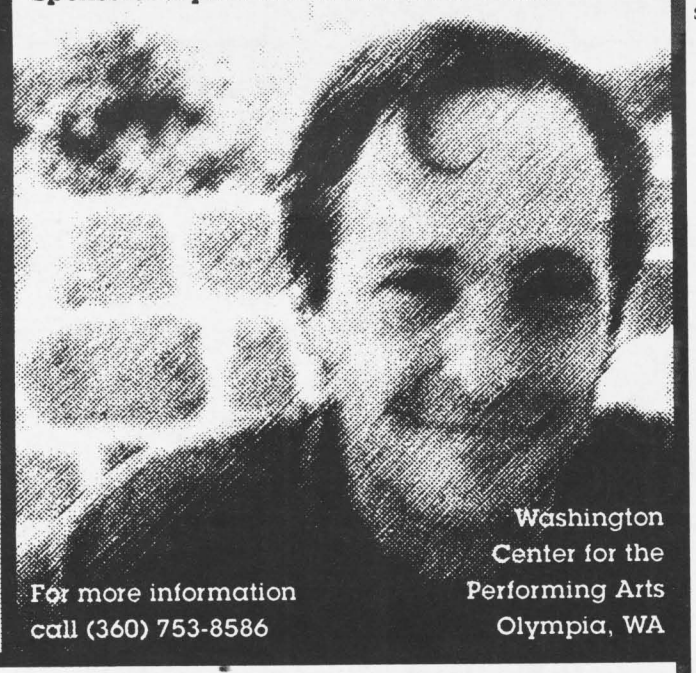

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An Open Letter to Heterosexuals—Especially Males

Jerome Johnson

Dear Folks,

I'm writing this because Matt Shepard was lynched last month, in Laramie, Wyoming. Matt was brutally kidnapped, robbed and beaten unconscious. His killers bound him to a ranch fence and pis- tol whipped him with a .357 magnum, ignoring his pleas for his life, then left him for dead in the freezing prairie night. He succumbed several days later in a Colorado hospital, so savagely hurt that doctors were unable to operate on his head.

And I'm addressing this to heterosexual people—especially males—because we need to face the truth: we created homophobia, and it's up to us to stop it. Heterosexual males commit the vast majority of hate crimes, including murder, arson and other forms of hate-motivated violence. It's all very well to denounce bigotry and hate crimes, march and vote. But we need to go further—we need to create and maintain in everyday life a climate, an attitude, that no longer tolerates homophobia.

Let's be honest. Since Matt was lynched, how many times have we heard "straight" men say, "Another queer got beat to death," with an offhand shrug? Their whole attitude casual—"so what?" This is because they're "Real Men", born and bred in the "machismo" of American male chauvinism. In this mind-set, "Real Men" are not just heterosexual, but promiscuous (promiscuity/exploitation of women being a measure of ability). "Real Men" are strong in all respects, especially sexual and physical. Because men are men and women are women, "Real Men" are stronger than women, based on physical strength. "Real Men" look down on gay people, especially gay men, because they believe that gay men "choose" to be gay and therefore weak. Weaker even than women because they should "know better." It's even worse because they believe that not only gays embarrassing themselves, they're letting the entire gender down, and it's tough enough to keep up a man's place in the face of feminism.

Heterosexual males commit the vast majority of hate crimes, including murder, arson and other forms of hate-motivated violence.

This is paralled by the "Real Man's" firm belief in his own sexiness and confidence in his prowess. He understands that most women are interested in him, even if they don't act on it. But gay men, being weaker, are unable to resist and are liable to hit on or even grope him if he isn't careful. A big part of being careful means letting any gay person know that that a simple verbal declaration isn't enough—he'll get his head bashed in if he "tries anything."

"When was the last time anyone—let alone a gay person—ever hit on you or harass you?" I ask.

Every time, "Real Men" stiffen up and get defensive. "Well, never," they admit. "But I'm gonna let 'em know."

Wake up, guys: people already know. Don't flatter yourselves. And it's wrong and hateful to make violence your recourse. It's not needed and it's illegal, and I'm one heterosexual guy who will make sure you go to jail if you do.

As heterosexuals and as men, as need to fight homophobia in any way we can. When there's a bunch of us in the break room, and someone tells a "queer joke" thinking it's okay because we're all straight here, we need to stand up and voice our opposition. Every time—just as if it were a racist or sexist or otherwise wrong remark.

When the "Real Men" derisively ask us if we ourselves are gay be- cause we fight homophobia, implying that "Real Men" do not, we must answer: "Yes—and I am also black, Jewish, a Communist, a labor organi zer, a woman, a poor person. I'm sticking up for everyone oppressed just for who they are, murdered, beaten, robbed, dehumanized. It doesn't matter if it's Klansmen killing blacks or Jews, a white supremacist bombing synagogues, misogynists attacking womens' clinics. As long as any of us are in danger, NONE of us are safe."

When the "Real Men" ask why we care, we must answer: "Today it was someone we didn't know. But murder and violence and hate are wrong—and Matt was someone's son, someone's friend, someone who was loved. Like our loved ones."

Sure, I know it's a lot easier to do in Sylvester Park than it is at work, at home, at worship. But we must make it understood that hatred and violence must end. We're the ones who can stop it. To do that, we must change the climate. That means changing ourselves. I'm not saying that all heterosexuals and/or all heterosexual males buy into the "Real Man" syndrome, or commit violence. I applaud everyone who fights for civil rights. This letter is for everyone who thinks that it "isn't the same" as bigotry based on color, race, creed or gender.

It's just the same. Let's get busy—we have a culture to change.

In Afghanistan, women suffer grievously under Taliban tyranny.

In Congo, a bloody civil war escalates into a regional conflict.

In Laramie, Wyoming, Aaron Mckinney and Russell Henderson await trial for lynching Matt Shepard.

And in Olympia's Sylvester Park, a community gathers by candlelight in vigil of yet another hate crime, another lynching, with heavy heart. We know that again, someday, we'll have to come back.

The "Ex-Gay" Lie

Bruce Mirken

The religious right is lying to the American public about homosexuality. And they're spending big bucks to do it.

Political attacks on gays and lesbians have accelerated in recent months. Conservative congressman Dick Armey, R-Texas, recently called homosexuality a "sin" and Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss., has compared gays and lesbians to kleptomaniacs and alcoholics.

Gays and lesbians can "overcome homosexuality," proclaimed full-page ads appearing last week in the *New York Times, Washington Post* and *USA Today*.

"Thousands of ex-gays," the first of the ads declared, "have walked away from their homosexual identities." The ad campaign -- reportedly budgeted at $200,000 -- urged readers to call a toll-free number for information on "ex-gay ministries" and added, "If you really love someone, you'll tell them the truth."

Okay, here's the truth: "There is no evidence that any treatment can change a homosexual person's deep-seated sexual feelings for others of the same sex," the American Psychological Association has found. Survivors of these ministries have come forth in recent years to tell their stories. They describe scary, cult-like environments where conformity is enforced, questions and dissent are squelched, and members are occasionally driven to suicide.

Jallen Rix's experience in Desert Stream Ministries, a California "ex-gay" group, appears typical. He says rigid conformity and pressure to shut down their deepest feelings turned members into "emotional zombies." He was one of them, becoming "riddled with fear and guilt. It was like I fell into a pit. That's when you start to feel suicidal, because you tried so hard and it's not working."

Rix had the good sense to leave Desert Stream before acting on his suicidal feelings. He reports being far happier now that he has come to accept his homosexuality. But Kurt Jacobowitz-Cain, a former leader in Homosexuals Anonymous, says he did see members driven to suicide.

But do some people really walk away from the gay lifestyle, as the ads would have us believe? I tried to find out at an April 25 workshop presented by a coalition of "ex-gay" groups in Fremont, a quiet northern California suburb. Several people spoke at length of how they had renounced their homosexuality. But when two of us asked if they had truly lost all attraction to members of the same sex, the responses were illuminating. All who responded reluctantly acknowledged that they still feel attracted to their own gender. One angrily refused to answer at all.

These people -- hand-picked to be trotted out for the public as "ex-gay" success stories -- confirmed what Rix and Jacobowitz-Cain said: These groups don't really change people's sexual orientation. The best their followers manage is a sort of white-knuckled celibacy, straining to repress their innermost feelings.

Promoting "ex-gays" is a way for conservatives to oppose equal rights for gays and lesbians. After all, people who could simply walk away from their "chosen lifestyle" don't need civil-rights protections, do they?

The truth is that gay people can no more walk away from their sexual orientation than Trent Lott and Dick Armey can walk away from theirs.

Bruce Mirken is a free-lance writer based in San Francisco. Copyright 1998, Bruce Mirken. Re-print or electronic distribution without permission is prohibited. Call the Progressive Media Project for information, 608-257-4626. •

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For Matthew

Put an End to Gaybashing - Join In

Warren J. Blumenfeld

AN ADDRESS GIVEN AT A MEMORIAL VIGIL THURSDAY OCTOBER 15, 1998 AMHERST, MASSACHUSETTS TOWN COMMONS

I never met Matthew Shepard in life, but I feel I know Matthew Shepard in death. His passing hit me like the death of an old trusted friend. His loss to me is palpable.

Matthew hoped to dedicate his life to advancing the cause of human rights for all people. His uncle, R. W. Eaton, said that Matt was "a small person with a big heart, mind, and soul that someone tried to beat out of him."

I come to you tonight with both good news and bad news, and I will save the good news to the end. The bad news is that what happened to Matthew Shepard is nothing new. We see hate- motivated violence against gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people and other targeted social groups on the rise. Pick up any of our publications and each week you will see stories of brutal and senseless attacks. Groups of young males wielding baseball bats and guns at anyone who looks "different." and men waiting outside women's spaces attacking women on their way home. Recently hitting the national spotlight we witnessed the brutal attacks on Rodney King in Los Angeles, the barbarous slaying of James Byrd, Jr. in Jasper, Texas, and the fierce rape and murder of a 7-year-old girl in a Las Vegas casino bathroom.

And these are simply the most extreme examples of hate- related violence in general and so-called "gay bashing" specifically. I am here, then, to restate a simple truth -- the killers of Matthew Shepard live in a society that promotes intolerance, for gay bashing comes in a great many forms:

Whenever hate mongers like Fred Phelps and his followers threaten to picket and protest the funerals of gay and lesbian people, including Matthew Shepard, and people who have died of AIDS, that's gay bashing.

Whenever university students, like those at Colorado State University, spray paint a scarecrow at their homecoming parade with vicious epithets in reference to Matthew Shepard, that's gay bashing.

Whenever the political and theocratic right produce newspaper and television ads that promise "conversion" and "escape" from the so-called "homosexual lifestyle" in the guise of Christian love and understanding, that's gay bashing.

Whenever politicians like Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott proclaim in the media that homosexuality is a disease in the categories of kleptomania and alcoholism, that's gay bashing.

Whenever the U.S. Senate and other legislative bodies refuse to confirm a nominee for public service, like James Hormel as ambassador to Luxembourg, simply on account of their sexual or gender identity alone and not on their actual qualifications, that's gay bashing.

Whenever so-called religious leaders like Pat Robertson blame natural disasters on city governments that have enacted laws protecting the rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people, that's gay bashing.

Whenever mainstream religious denominations condemn homosexuality with one breath and actively obstruct frank and honest sexuality and AIDS education programs in our schools with another, that's gay bashing.

Whenever any young person is tossed out on the street when family members become aware of their sexual or gender identity, that's gay bashing.

Whenever any person is ridiculed, isolated, confronted, or attacked for not conforming to rigid constructions of gender expression, that's gay bashing.

Whenever hate crimes legislation is drafted without including the documentation of violence directed against lesbians, gay males, bisexuals, and transgender people, branding this as nothing more than the granting of "special rights," that's gay bashing.

Whenever professors in our universities and teachers in our schools exclude the stories of our lives, our experiences, and our accomplishments in the classroom, that's gay bashing.

Whenever any one of us is taught to hate ourselves each one of us is demeaned, and that certainly is gay bashing, and we have a right, or rather an obligation, to speak up, to fight back with all the energy, with all the unity, and with all the love that we are capable of.

No amount of intimidation will ever lock us away again. Lesbians, gay males, bisexuals, transgender people, and our loving and supportive heterosexual allies are coming out in greater numbers than ever

Today we still live in a society that proclaims we don't have a right to exist, but exist we do, everywhere, in all walks of life.

For as we all know, we are the students, professors, teachers, guidance counselors, day care workers, parents -- and still some people and groups attempt to prevent us from having contact with the young people of our nation. And because of their insensitivity and fear, the gay bashing continues.

We are the social workers, psychiatrists, workers at homeless shelters and rape crisis centers -- and still some people and groups blame us for the break up of what they call the "traditional American family." And the gay bashing continues.

The reality is that we are holding up this culture. If all the lesbians, bisexuals, gay males, and transgender people suddenly left our jobs, this country would literally crumble.

Referring to Matthew Shepard's shattered body, his uncle cried: "It's like something you might see in war." Yes, we are fighting a war: a war against ignorance, which is literally killing our people. And amidst this crisis, segments of our country perpetuate a process of collective denial by refusing to acknowledge the mere existence of this war in its attempts to silence us. But silent we are not, and silent we will never be again.

There is an old tradition in our western states of ranchers killing a coyote and tying it to a fence to scare off other coyotes, and to keep them from coming out of their hiding places. That's what Matthew Shepard's killers did to him. They smashed his skull and tied him to a fence as if he were a lifeless scarecrow, where he was bound for over 18 hours in near freezing temperatures. The message to the rest of us from these killers is quite clear: stay locked away in your suffocating and dank closets, and don't ever come out.

But the good news that I alluded to earlier is that no amount of intimidation will ever lock us away again. Lesbians, gay males, bisexuals, transgender people, and our loving and supportive heterosexual allies are coming out in greater numbers than ever before, as witnessed in the large outpouring of grief, anger, and love over this past week. As marginalized people, we are pushing the boundaries unwilling any longer to accept the repressive status quo. In coalition with other disenfranchised groups and allies, we are refusing to buckle under and to assimilate into a corrupt and corrupting system that forces people to relinquish their integrity and their humanity.

One year before the death of another of our slain leaders, gay San Francisco City Supervisor Harvey Milk recorded a will that was to be played in the event of his assassination. In it he stated that he never considered himself simply as a candidate for public office, but rather, always considered himself as part of a movement: a liberation movement for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people -- and a liberation movement for all people.

Each time Harvey spoke in front of a crowd, he urged people to come out everywhere and often: "Tell you immediate family," he would say, "tell friends, neighbors, people in the stores you shop in, cab drivers, everyone." And he urged heterosexual people to be our allies, to interrupt derogatory remarks and jokes, to support us and offer aid when needed. If we all did this, he said, we could change the world.

Well, in his brief time with us, Matthew Shepard also changed lives. His caring soul transformed the people he met. Though his attackers may have succeeded in devastating his body, they did not and will never succeed in destroying his gentle spirit, or in extinguishing the heart of a community and a movement for social justice, for Matthew's spirit continues, inspiring a people, a nation, a world.

We can take solace in the words of Judy Shepard, Matt's mother, when she tells us: "Go home, give your kids [and I would add, all your loved ones] a hug, and don't let a day go by without telling them you love them."

For Matthew, and Judy, and for all of us, I do believe that love WILL conquer the hatred. Matthew, thank you for the riches you have left us. We will continue the struggle in your name to make the world a safer and more supportive environment for all its people. Matthew, may you forever rest in peace.

Warren J. Blumenfeld Editor, Homophobia: How We All Pay the Price Editor, Journal of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Identity Co-author, Looking at Gay and Lesbian Life ●

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WELFARE "REFORM" or BLAMING THE POOR FOR POVERTY

Frank Hoffman

This is the third in a series about the meaning of "welfare reform" to people in Olympia.

Dodi and Paul Trasher want the usual things from life. They want life to be easier and better for their children. They take responsibility for their lives, but, as Dodi says," who could have anticipated all this illness."

Their youngest, two and a half, had a kidney removed last month. The nine year old has Attention Deficit Disorder.

January 16, Paul, the breadwinner, was put in the hospital after he went to the doctor because he had a temperature of 104 and the back of his leg was inflammed and breaking out in blisters. He had been bitten by a brown recluse spider.

They told him to stay home with his leg elevated for three weeks.

He got a paycheck in February and worked 2 days in March before the leg became reinfected and the doctors put him back in the hospital for another week.

All the small blood vessels in his leg are destroyed and the lymph system that circulates fluids has broken down so the leg becomes swollen easily. He wears an inflatable boot to keep the swelling down. He'll be wearing this for the rest of his life, because the doctors tell them the leg is not going to get any better. Paul has been told not to stand more than a half hour at a time and to keep the leg elevated.

Paul, throughout all this, has remained employed. He believes strongly his role is to work outside the home and bring home that paycheck.

Dodi focused on the children, particularly the two with serious medical disorders. Until Paul was unable to work for weeks at a time and they had no money for food, rent or medical bills.

She applied for public assistance the end of February. They had to attend a 2 half hour Workfirst orientation, even though Paul had a job, even though they had sick children, even though Paul was supposed to keep his leg elevated.

They were told that they were not eligible because Paul had worked too much in January. DSHS did give them $85 worth of food stamps for March. They also qualified for medical.

They had no money for the March rent. A friend told them DSHS has a special program to pay rent in emergencies. Their caseworker told them there was no such thing , that DSHS had done away with it.

A local social service worker called DSHS for them and they found the program does exist and it paid their rent for March (not including the late charges that had been piling up). The weekend this was being played out, they wondered what would happen to them - would they just be out on the street?

They applied for a grant from Labor and Industries. They had hospital bills by then of $20,000. They were given $537. The rental late charges, bills and food wiped that out.

Paul had worked 2 days in March. DSHS gave them $100 for April and $85 worth of food stamps. Paul and Dodi have 3 children living at home.

They applied for the emergency rental money again and were told by their caseworker, "this is the last time we will do this. You need to move to a place you can afford the rent." Of course they can't afford to move. They don't have money for the deposits or the first and last months rent. Their current rent is $590.

They received a grant of $636 from DSHS for May. They had received a grant from L&I to pay basic bills. DSHS took all but $47 0f that, which they applied to rental late charges. Luckily, they have an understanding landlord. During this time they are using a car borrowed from their church to keep medical appointments.

Paul worked half days in May. DSHS gave them $300 in June - and that was the last from them. They kept receiving contradictory letters from their caseworker about their eligibility for benefits.

Dodi began working at a food processing plant 2 days a week. She asked DSHS to help with childcare. It refused, saying that Paul was home. The youngest are now in Headstart and preschool.

Paul went back to work full time in June. Dodi started work full time at night in July. She called DSHS in August and asked to receive medical. DSHS didn't send medical coupons. The caseworker said she lost the paperwork and made Dodi feel that was somehow her fault.

Their son broke both legs right below the knee in August. They had a new caseworker and were having trouble getting medical coupons. She took her son to the doctor in September and was told they couldn't see him because he wasn't in their computer. The caseworker kept saying that Dodi wasn't doing the paperwork. Dodi would say she would do it if they would tell her about it - she's not clairvoyant.

The children were covered for medical in September, but Paul was not on the authorisation letter. Dodi called DSHS and didn't get a response. The monthly report listed a new caseworker, who told her the old one had moved.

The family's net income, from both their jobs, is less than $1000 a month.

Dodi says that, "faith that God will meet our needs," has got her this far. And she has received much community support.

DSHS often made her feel she didn't deserve any help and if they were out on the street, well, that was their problem.

A fair welfare system would deal with each person as an individual, not as part of a group, Dodi believes. And she thinks the same of a critical public: "they don't know my situation."

"By stereotyping me, they hurt my kids. If you want to blame somebody, blame me. Don't hurt my kids." •

A fair welfare system would deal with each person as an individual, not as part of a group, Dodi believes. And she thinks the same of a critical public: "they don't know my situation."

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Columbus Arrested & Deported!!

Eugene, Oregon USA October 12, 1998

Admiral Christopher Columbus, infamous explorer and pillager of already occupied continents, was arrested Monday at the University of Oregon in Eugene. He was charged with aggravated murder, first degree rape, first degree sodomy, kidnapping, theft, fraud, assault with deadly intent, trespass, and criminal mischief when a bystander witnessed the Admiral accosting students, yelling "Happy Genocide Day!" demanding gold and threatening to cut off their hands or abduct and sell them into slavery.

"Get outta here with your rotten attitude!" Heckled University students, who tried to chase him away, throwing rocks and beer bottles.

Travelling with fencing "Conquistadores", Spanish soldiers in heavy armament, Columbus roared defiantly when confronted by students. "What!? It's MY holiday. Happy Genocide!" Fleeing citizens arrest and assaulting a bus dirver, he was pepper-sprayed by Eugene Police and subdued.

King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain were arrested by Customs Agents at the Madrid Airport trying to transport stolen property- gold from Jews and Indians, and could not be reached for comment.

Witnesses said Columbus cowered and waived his Miranda rights while taken into custody, muttering about "liberal plots" against him. A search warrant was served on his ship, which was towed by a mountain bike. When searched by EPD several dredlocked EarthFirst!ers were found in the hull and released. "Discovered" in Columbus' ship were ten dozen bars of Black Hills gold, several hundred million board feet of timber stolen from the Willamette National Forest, and a card from a Florence-area developer.

Suspicious the Admiral was hording other contraband, the EPD strip searched him and held him at the Lane County Corrections Facility until Friday. Determining that the nefarious colonist suffers from paranoid schizophrenia with delusions of grandeur, Health Officers forcibly administered Halizon, Lane County Corrections officials said.

The Conquistadores were arrested at the California-Mexican border by the Mexican Army. Extradited to Mexico City they face similar charges and if convicted, the death penalty by a Mexican Firing Squad, according to an Amnesty International press release.

Christopher Columbus was deported by the Immigration and Naturalization Service Friday to Geneva and charged for violating international laws against slavery, torture, genocide and ecocide. He, Ferdinand and Isabella face a United Nations tribunal comprised of Pagans, Jews, Moors, African-Americans and Indigenous Americans.

Call (541) 607-7064 or e-mail isco@efn.org for more information.

Indigenous Support Coalition of Oregon Looks Ahead

Big Mountain Elders Inspire Local Activists

Beth Newberry

Dine'h (Navajo) Elders bravely faced a deadline March 31, 1997 to give up their rights and sign leases or relocation contracts. Many Dine'h from the Black Mesa refused to sign either. A new group, Indigenous Support Coalition of Oregon formed a year later, inspired by these Elders. The first thing we did was protest the anniversary of the so-called "deadline" with banners and petitions at the University of Oregon. The Dine'h resisters are still threatened with forced removal by February 2000.

Most of the activists of Indigenous Support Coalition of Oregon stayed at Dine'h homes to help with chores as witnesses of the 1997 "deadline". Now, ISCO seeks to be proactive with our vision for the future. While other groups reacted by mobilizing for another government-imposed ultimatum only to burn-out, ISCO looks beyond to visualize our common survival so we can manifest and look forward to our successes.

With the hoopla about the millenium and concern for our future, popular culture suspects our own "deadline" is nearing while the entertainment industry exploits our growing fear. Rather than feeding the frenzy, ISCO faces our challenges with optimism. Indigenous Support Coalition of Oregon is broadening our commitment to other First Nations environmental struggles including local issues as well as the Dine'h resistance at Black Mesa, Arizona. ISCO is also expanding into a statewide non-profit group.

A fall caravan bringing Dine'h families food and winter supplies will leave Oregon around Thanksgiving. ISCO is bringing wood and wood cutting tools and winter supplies to Dine'h families. Winter is often harsh in the high-altitude desert where families are forbidden to repair their one-room dirt floor hogans. Work crews bringing wood for the Elders' stoves help with their cooking and heating as snow piles outside around Peabody Coal's strip mine and slurry line nearby.

ISCO is planning future projects with Black Mesa Permaculture Project and Traditional Support Caravan of Colorado, who are creating vital gardens with Dine'h residents and restoring water delivery systems destroyed by coal strip mining. Indigenous Support Coalition of Oregon sees our primary role as easing their hardship and affirming Dine'h survival by supporting their self-sufficiency while they find their own political solutions.

Under ISCO's umbrella the Leonard Peltier Support Group of Eugene rallies for the release of this American Indian political prisoner and Senate hearings on his case, AIM and the FBI at Pine Ridge, South Dakota in the 1970's. Letter writing campaigns also demand outside medical care for Peltier, who is in pain and at risk of treatment in the prison system.

Indigenous Support Coalition of Oregon can be contacted at PO Box 11715, Eugene, OR 97440 or isco@efn.org, lpsg@efn.org or bigmnt@efn.org or by calling (541) 607-7064. ●

With the hoopla about the millenium and concern for our future, popular culture suspects our own "deadline" is nearing while the entertainment industry exploits our growing fear.

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The winner will be announced in a series of newspapers, including 'News from Indian Country' and in alt.native newsgroup, with the consent to use the winners name. Regardless, the LPCF will post that a winner has been selected.

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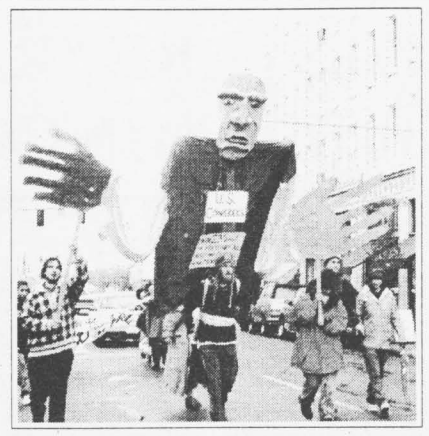


Chiapas: A Day For Democracy

by Frank Hoffman

A rainy day in Sylvester Park. October, and the rain comes down hard at times. Cold after so many days of late summer sunshine. Windy now and then. Fifty or sixty people, most of them trying to keep their faces dry by turning away from the wind and bowing their heads. Eventually, giving in to the rain, the crowd joined the speakers up in the gazebo.

We were there to honor the women and men, the Zapatistas, who have been resisting the government of Mexico in the name of democracy and freedom for the oppressed indigenous peoples who live in the state of Chiapas. And everywhere. Indigenous people everywhere who are bound their whole lives by the economic and political chains of the invaders.

We were there to honor and pray for the families murdered in a church in Acteal by forces supported by the government of Mexico. We wore the names of the dead on bandanas wrapped around our heads.

And we were there to encourage ourselves in our daily struggles to be decent human beings who believe in a human community that transcends ethnicity and class. To support a dream of equality and freedom. To comment on the violence we activists do to each other in our little communities - men against women, race against race - and to swear again to struggle against this violence in ourselves.

We negotiated with the motorcycle policeman about a route to the post office we could march to mail letters of protests to the government, without getting arrested ourselves for so modest a crime as obstructing traffic. We managed this, carrying the larger than life sized puppets the Art and Revolution people helped us build.

Those of us with bandanas honoring the dead of Acteal fell down "dead" in front of the Olympia Post Office until the actions of our government could for once raise us up. The Olympia postmaster got upset. We mailed our letters and marched back to the park.

There was none of the press coverage like that given to a demonstration held in the park a week earlier. Maybe it was the rain.

Maybe the people are tired and sad and confused. It rains on the just and the unjust the same. Who would claim to be righteous in these times?

The Zapatistas? - Yes!

The Palestinians? - Yes!

The Western Shoshone? - Yes!

Small-Town Life in Nicaragua

Stephen Bray

I have been aware of Santo Tomas, a small rural town in Nicaragua, ever since 1988 when the Olympia to Nicaragua Construction Brigade helped to build a women's sewing cooperative. Later that year the Thurston Santo Tomas Sister-County Association (TSTSCA) was formed, a local grassroots organization that opposed the efforts of the Reagan Administration (primarily through support of the Contras and an economic blockade) to destroy the revolutionary Sandinista government.

As a way of condemning the official U.S. foreign policy and expressing solidarity with the people of Nicaragua, the TSTSCA created a community-to-community relationship with Santo Tomas, a poor cattle and dairy town of 15,000 people which is located about four hours by bus from Managua in the central department of Chontales. Over the last ten years, the TSTSCA has donated substantial material and financial aid to assist projects that encourage self-determination and self-sufficiency. It also has sponsored delegations from Santo Tomas to Olympia that promote greater understanding and friendship. Two visitors were guests in our home.

When it was time to leave in mid-June, our boys were not eager to return to Olympia. They were sad to be saying goodbye to their friends, and it was very heartwarming to see how much they had accepted the lifestyle of a rural Nicaragua town.

But this spring, my family and I finally had the opportunity to see Santo Tomas for ourselves and become more fully acquainted with the community. For three months, my wife, a family physician on sabbatical from Group Health Cooperative, volunteered at the Clinica Popular - a community health clinic that was founded in 1991 by the Committee for Community Development (CDC), the partner group of the TSTSCA. My two boys, Aaron, 9, and Joel, 6, attended Ruben Dario school which has a sister relationship with their school, Lincoln, in Olympia. As a journalist, I was interested in getting to know Santo Tomas personally and learning more about how Nicaragua has changed since the Sandinistas lost the 1990 presidential election.

The triumph of the Sandinista revolution in 1979 was a moment of national celebration. Julio Rivas, the current administrator of the CDC in Santo Tomas, had marched into Managua on July 19, 1979 as a member of the liberating army. "It was very emotional, " he said. "We sang, laughed, and cried." Sylvio Cabrera, one of the founders of the CDC, recalled "the euphoria" in conservative Santo Tomas when the news arrived that Somoza was finally defeated.

In coming to Santo Tomas, it was hard not to recall my previous visits to Nicaragua in 1983 and 1986 when the political intensity was intoxicating. The overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship had been motivated by and inspired a vision of fundamental social change. Although the country was already facing an enormous challenge from the threats and actions of the Reagan Administration, there was still a feeling of hope. Everyone I talked with was excited about the opportunity to create a new society. It was not just a slogan. It was happening.

In Santo Tomas, many individuals and families benefited from the new priorities of the revolution. A number of CDC members volunteered in the literacy campaign and later had the opportunity to attend school and obtain professional training. Yessenia Sol is, who visited Olympia last January, came from an extremely poor family and had sold candies on the streets as a child. She was one of several people who became schoolteachers. Carlos Ochoa, with whom my wife worked at Clinica Popular, had the opportunity to attend medical school.

Yet, sadly, times have changed. Through numerous conversations I realized that my memories of the 80's were not shared by those who lived in Santo Tomas. They recall the Sandinista era as a period of hardship, not optimism. They spoke of difficulties, not social change. They remember not the prospects of a new society but the daily reality of a deteriorating economy. And, above all, they identify the decade of the 80's not as a time of hope but as a time of war.

The Contra war, organized and financed by the Reagan Administration, overshadowed all other aspects of the revolution. It forced the Sandinistas to divert precious resources that had been used for health and education into national defense. From my perspective, the Contra war was an act of foreign aggression, but in Santo Tomas it was experienced as a civil war. Everybody had stories of brothers or sons who fought on both sides of the conflict.

In order to defend the country, the Sandinistas established a military draft. In the United States during the Vietnam War, draft resistance was a crime, but in Nicaragua the draft - and the manner in which it was implemented - alienated many families who responded by fleeing the country or giving support to the Contras. According to CDC members, the draft which was intended to keep the Sandinistas in power may have contributed to their defeat.

"Without the draft," Sylvio Cabrera said, "the Sandinistas wouldn't have lost the election (of 1990)."

The outcome of the election was not only a mandate about the Sandinistas but a reflection of the high casualties of the conflict. "People were afraid that if they voted for the FSLN the war would continue," said Julio Rivas.

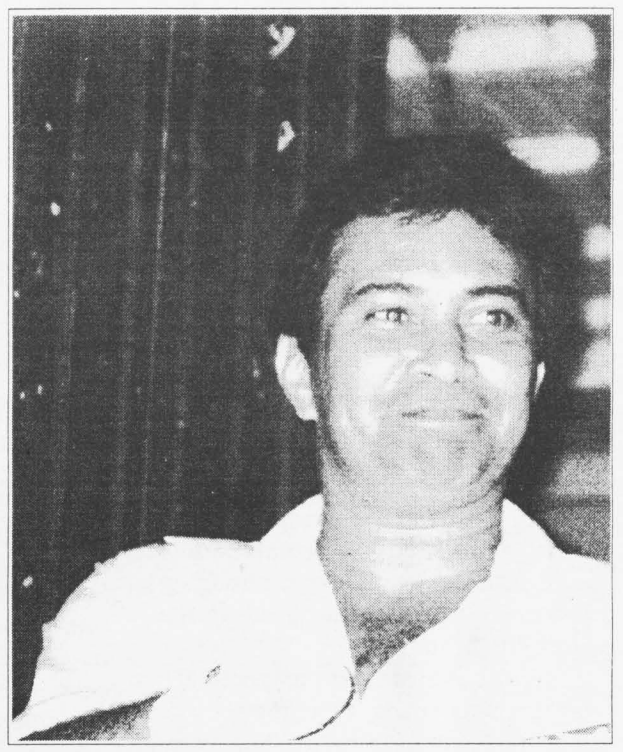
Unfortunately, in the absence of war and with a change of governments the suffering has not disappeared. There is less killing (though more street crime) but the decreasing lack of economic, education and health care opportunities is hurting the poorest people in more subtle ways. Unemployment is staggering, and salaries for everything from domestic work to public health doctors are insufficient for a minimal standard of living. Schoolteachers earn only about $50 a month, and their salary is no longer fully guaranteed by the government. More people are struggling to survive in an informal economy which offers no predictable income.

As in other Third World countries, the government is slashing social service spending in order to meet the demands of international bankers. The right-wing Aleman government, which was elected in 1996, is now charging tuition for public schools as well as cutting public health services. In Managua a recently-opened McDonalds caters to the wealthy while in Santo Tomas staples like rice, beans and cooking oil are increasingly more expensive. Ordinary vegetables are too costly for most consumers.

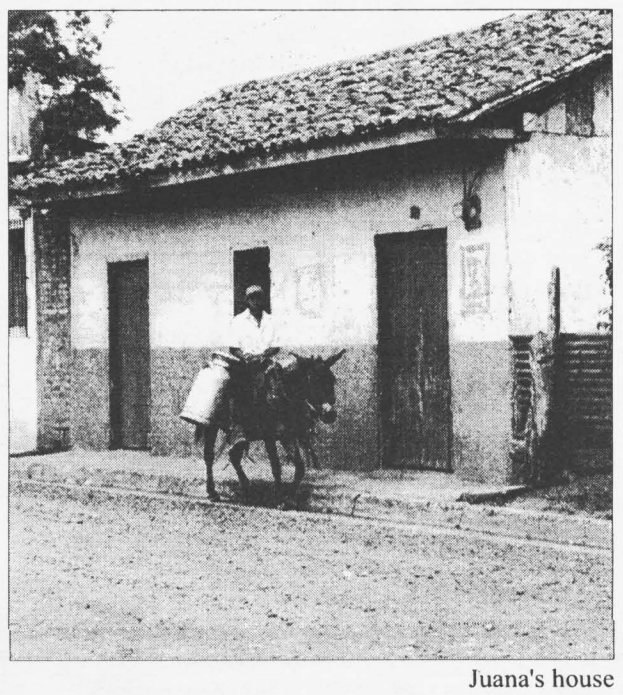
Santo Tomas is also facing an environmental crisis. We were living there during one of the worst droughts in the history of the country. Cattle were dying from lack of food and the water shortage was critical. The severity of the drought was blamed on El Nino, but it was also clear that longer-term changes were creating a future tragedy. Many people commented on how much cooler Santo Tomas used to be, but gradual deforestation, caused by individuals collecting wood for cooking or clearing of the land for agriculture and cattle, has produced a hotter and drier climate.

We enjoyed our experience in Santo Tomas, making new friends and adjusting to a very different lifestyle, but we also were aware of the larger issues. Santo Tomas has a history as a conservative town and was never a target of the repression of the Somoza era. Few people discuss politics and the remaining Sandinistas feel almost persecuted in town. Yet, nationally, the Sandinistas face an enormous challenge attempting to retain its revolutionary appeal and

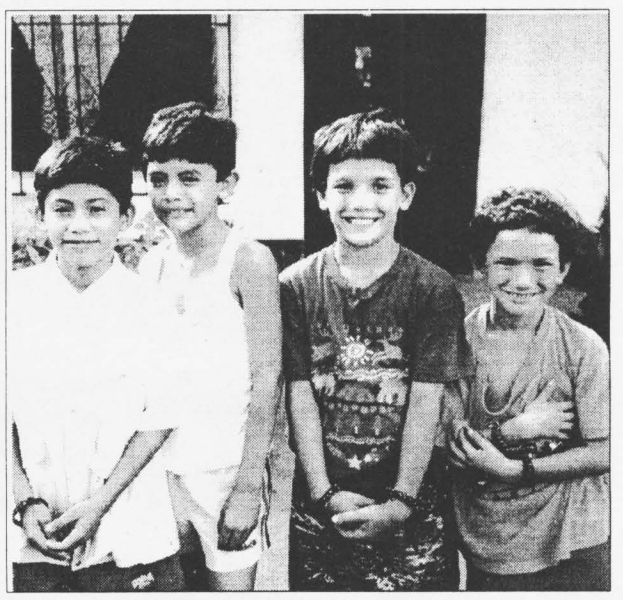
(Continued next page)



Julio Rivas



Juana's house



Ronal, Yesmer, Aaron and Joel

NICARAGUA '98

Small–town life in

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7 PM

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(Nicaragua, continued)

agenda in the current political and economic environment . As a result of economic globalization, internal party conflicts and acts of poor judgment, it appeared that the Sandinistas were losing the battle to remain a viable political force.

And that was true before the former president, Daniel Ortega, still the leader of the party and a member of Congress, was accused by his step-daughter of years of sexual abuse. Despite efforts by Ortega to keep it a private family matter, the allegations were damaging his integrity and further eroding the credibility of the party.

In terms of the larger perspective, it was disheartening to compare the plight of Nicaragua today with what had seemed possible during the early years of the Sandinista government when most sectors of society had an active role in making changes that were improving the standard of living for a majority of the people. It made us angry to realize how the efforts of our government had undermined this rare opportunity for a radical shift in the balance of economic power and a broad-based cultural revolution.

"The FSLN project was beautiful," said Pedro Contreras, a CDC member and high school teacher in Santo Tomas. "If they'd been allowed to govern without war they could have achieved a lot."

During our brief stay in Santo Tomas, however, we observed many dedicated individuals associated with the CDC demonstrating their commitment to improve their community. In addition to the sewing cooperative which is still in operation, the CDC runs a public kitchen, the Comedor Infantil, that serves free lunch to over 200 kids daily. A group of women are cultivating food on land outside of town that will allow the Comedor to become more self-sufficient. Despite our interest in gaining a perspective on the current situation in Nicaragua, our days were focused on the problem of obtaining water, learning how to stay comfortable in the intense heat, and enjoying our social interactions. For three months, Santo Tomas was our home.

When it was time to leave in mid-June, our boys were not eager to return to Olympia. They were sad to be saying goodbye to their friends, and it was very heartwarming to see how much they had accepted the lifestyle of a rural Nicaragua town. They were enjoying the opportunity to play baseball on the street with other kids rather than complaining about the lack of running water. And my wife and formed a close relationship with the family whose house we were renting.

Our opportunity could be yours. The TSTSCA is looking for other individuals and families from the community who would like to spend time in Santo Tomas. Do you have an interest in working to strengthen the sister-county relationship by lending your skills to help support projects in Santo Tomas that benefit the entire community? The TSTSCA is also interested in people who want to support these projects through involvement with the local organization. For more information, contact Jean Eberhardt at 943-8642, or attend the monthly meeting which takes place on the third Monday evening of the month at the First United Methodist Church on the corner of Legion and Boundary in Olympia. •

Suriname: Ethnic Pluralism Under Pressure

Tom Lineham

"Suriname Islam is an example to the world of our willingness to cooperate with all people," according to Michel Sabound, the Sunni Iman of Suriname when I asked him in a recent interview what he would like people in the United States to know about the faith in his country.

A former Dutch colony of 440,000 inhabitants located on the northeast coast of South America, modern Suriname is a model of pluralism. No one race, ethnic group or religion dominates the political scene. During its economic and political hegemony over the area until Suriname gained independence in 1975, the Dutch called the shots. For hundreds of years, the colonists imported slaves and indentured servants from all over the world whose descendants have remained.

As a result of the human influx, while walking the busy streets of the capital city Paramaribo (150,000) one encounters all shades and colors of humanity: Black Creoles, East Indians, Javanese, Chinese, Amerindians and even a few whites.

Of late the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) officially recognized Suriname as a Moslem country which makes the besieged nation eligible for money and technical assistance. Indeed, Suriname is the only OIC member in all of the Americas. In October, the Islamic Development Bank provided the country $10 million for the purpose of purchasing fuel.

As the Iman pointed out to me, the current government coalition is now 50% Moslem. Even the current opposition has a number of Moslem representatives. The two largest Islamic communities in Suriname are found in the Javanese community (descendants of indentured servants from Java) and East Indians that comprised 15% of the East Indian population. 85% of the remaining East Indian population are Hindus.

The leading Moslem groups have their differences. For instance, the Javanese community is split between two groups, the traditionalists and the reformists. The latter, when bowing to Mecca, bow to the west and the former, bow to the east. The reformists tend to read the Koran more literally, while the traditionalists have incorporated ceremonies that have links to the old Buddhist culture that once dominated mother Indonesia.

"But these are not issues that should separate us," according to the Iman. Nine Islamic organizations met in September to discuss how Moslems could better leverage their power in Suriname politics. Currently Moslem leaders associate with several different political parties.

"United we stand a better chance to make changes," echoed the director of the Javanese owned radio station, F. S. Kertokalio. "However, the new government doesn't listen to the people," he added. The youthful looking political veteran with salt and pepper hair explained that his party chairman Marsha Jamin of the Pendawa Lima fled to Holland fearing for his life during the 1982 military coup and desperately pleaded for him to follow. He expects his party to take part in expected strikes soon. Earlier in the year the parliamentary opposition joined by labor and sections of the business community led demonstrations to protest governmental corruption and inaction on a variety of concerns.

When I visited in August and September, Suriname faced another political crisis. The economy reeled after the Dutch cut of economic and social aid this year when Suriname refused to extradite Surinamese strong man, Desi Bourtese, for alleged drug trafficking.

Bourtese was under the international spot light when as a military leader, he conducted two successful coups against civilian governments. In 1982 coup his efforts turned bloody when he ordered the execution of 15 opposition leaders and members of Suriname's small intelligentsia. Reports indicated some victims died at Bourtese own hands after torture. World leaders including the USA and Holland vigorously protested the usurpation of the democratically elected government and pressured Bourtese to return civilian rule.

Now a civilian, Bourtese, if nothing else, is agile as he returned to power as the head of the National Democratic Party (NDP) which holds seats in the current National Assembly. Following the last election the NDP managed to attract enough partners to establish a slim coalition to take charge of the government about two years ago. The new government selected Jules Wijdenbosch as president who appointed Bourtese to the post of deputy to the President. But Bourtese actually runs the ship to the chagrin of the Dutch.

These developments have set the stage for the current government to re-evaluate its dependency on the Hague and look toward building relations with other power blocks.

The Islamic leaders I spoke with, though not enamored by Bourtese, felt the current situation could somehow lead to a significant re-alignment of the country's international relations and perhaps stronger relations with the Islamic world.

But Moslems only make up 25% of the population. The Hindustani's compose nearly 35%. Most of the rest identify with several Christian strains primarily Moravian and Catholics. Bourtese is black and during his previous time in power, he ostensibly identified with the Cuba model.

As the politicians sort out the issues life goes on pretty much the same despite the hardships in this tropical jungle covered country. Under-employed men walk around busy and congested Paramaribo carrying bird cages so as to listen to the warbling of their exotic feathery captives. Commuters languidly board ancient looking dhow passenger ferries to cross the chocolate covered Suriname River to their villages on the other side. And shoppers of all races swarm into what Gabriel Garcia Marquez called the infernal market of Paramaribo in search the best bargains on fruits, vegetables and fish. First, however, they must past through the lines of the black marketers looking to exchange the turgid Suriname guilders for USA dollars. •

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Throw Them All Out!

Ron Jacobs

Is it a right wing conspiracy, like Hilary says? Or just a case of an adulterer caught with his zipper down? And, more importantly for the left, does it represent a rift in the ruling class? If so, how? These are questions running through my mind these days as Bill Clinton's detailing of his affair with Lewinsky plays on the television screens across the nation. Although I personally could care less about Bill and his sexual partners, it is obvious that there are those in the ruling elites who believe his peccadilloes will be enough to bring down his presidency. Furthermore, these elements not only relish their embarassment of the man, they are also willing to stop at nothing to destroy him.

Why does Clinton engender such hatred? After all, his policies are not much different from those attempting to destroy him -- he's helped the rich get richer, he's left the poor out to dry, and he's carried on the war against unruly elements in the empire -- all the while giving these anti-human policies a human face. Hell, he's better at maintaining and expanding the empire than Reagan was. But the right still hates him.

The answer lies not in his politics as much as it does in his style and background. In the same way that Kennedy represented a dangerous vision to the right in 1960 despite his fundamentally pro-business, imperial politics, Clinton represents a similar danger to the right in the 1990s. Since day one on the presidential trail back in 1992 in New Hampshire, Clinton's record as a draft dodger and pot smoker has hounded him. Now, those of us who were in the thick of the political and countercultural revolution of the 1960s and 1970s know that Bill was like those guys we all knew who never really got it. They didn't call the cops names when they attacked a demonstration, they didn't inhale or take acid, and they thought SDS was too radical. So it's interesting, to say the least, that he is considered to represent the counterculture and all its "evils".

This is where the split in the ruling class occurs. Along cultural lines. I am reminded of Nathaniel Hawthorne's story "The Maypole of Merry Mount" wherein non-Puritan English settlers in the Massachusetts colony join the Lord of May in a pagan revelry around the maypole only to be attacked by Puritan John Endicott's minions. After ruining the celebration by the maypole revelers, Endicott finalizes his attack by destroying the maypole and arresting the revelers. Just as the pagan celebrations of the Lord of May and his group represented sexuality and the devil to Endicott, the counterculture and its values (despite the commodification and consequent mutation of those values) represent evil and the destruction of the American way as proscribed by the Puritanism of Ken Starr and his element.

In the Puritan version of our history, the others in U.S. society -- blacks, women and children -- either kept their mouths shut or opened them only to say yes sir. That is what changed in the 1960s. That, too, is what the theocratic right wants a return to. They would like to replicate the intrusion into Bill's private life in everybody's home. The drug war, anti-gay legislation, welfare "reform", and the continued erosion of civil rights, especially those of people of color and the young, are all facets of this backwards motion. Unfortunately for Clinton, his support of this agenda (with the possible exception of its most obvious racist, sexist and heterosexist aspects) has backfired. Not only are his right wing allies deserting him in his time of need, but laws he enacted allowing further abrogation of various civil liberties have been used in the investigation of him by Starr. Those proverbial chickens are coming home to roost.

Will he be impeached? I would like the process to go forward, primarily because I believe it will help expose not only the bankruptcy of the system, but also the agenda that the theocratic fascists behind the investigation have in mind for this country. However, I do not believe Clinton will be impeached nor will he resign. It seems some kind of compromise censure and punishment will be worked out, precisely for the reasons I note above. The empire does not want its foibles and battles to be completely in the open, despite the desires of some of its more extreme elements. More important than the sexcapades and the battles over morality is the necessity to keep the empire together. One example of this was the cruise missile attack on Sudan and Afghanistan. This attack, like the destruction of the Pequot nation by the Puritans of the Massachusetts colony, was not only tolerated by all of the empire's supporters (media, Congress, military, etc.), it was blessed. It also might be enough to keep Bill in office. After all, his so-called decisive manner in that episode was the topic of many editorials the following day. If he can act "presidential", than he is who the real powerbrokers in this country want in the driver's seat. However, if he can be chastised for his transgressions at the same time, then he (and those who come after him) will remember where the country's real power lies. It's not what is best for us that the power elites have in mind, it's what's best for them. As I watched Nelson Mandela praise Bill Clinton in his comments at the White House the other night, I was reminded how much of a friend he is considered to be by Africans and African-Americans. While he is certainly one of the few (if not the first) anti-racist U.S. presidents, this is not a reason to support him. It is the system he works for which defines his politics more than his personality or personal beliefs. His support from the people of Africa did not stop him from attacking Khartoum, nor would it prevent him from attacking another African country should the empire demand such a move. His support from black Americans has not prevented him from further militarizing the drug war--a war which is waged primarily in communities of color. His support by poor and working people has not prevented him from pushing through NAFTA, welfare reform and other anti-worker, anti-poor legislation. It is our duty on the left to point these things out. Although Bill may have been better than the opposition to some of us, the fact remains that in his time in office he has pretty much done what the right would have. The only difference is that he can sell it better. I say, let the rulers tear at each other like dogs. Let us take advantage of the moment and organize a movement that leaves them and their politics of sleaze, corruption and hatred of the people in the dust. •

More important than the sexcapades and the battles over morality is the necessity to keep the empire together. One example of this was the cruise missile attack on Sudan and Afghanistan.

Civil Rights Endorsements

	Labor	NOW	FV
U.S. Senate - Patty Murray	✓	✓	
U.S. House, 3rd - Brian Baird	✓	✓	✓
U.S. House, 9th - Adam Smith	✓		✓
Supreme Court, Pos. 1 - Hugh Spitzer	✓	✓	
- Faith Ireland		✓	
Supreme Court, Pos. 5 - Barbary Madsen	✓		
Initiative 200	No	No	
Initiative 688	Yes	Yes	
Initiative 694		No	
Referedum 49	No		
Washington Legislature, 22nd - Cathy Wolfe			✓
- Sandra Romero			✓
Thurston Commissioner - Kevin O'Sullivan	✓		✓
Thurston Coroner - Judy Arnold	✓		✓
Thurston Treaserer - Robin Hunt	✓		✓
Thurston Auditor - Keith Clark	✓		✓
Thurston Clerk - Betty Gould	✓		✓
Thurston Assessor - Patricia Costello	✓		✓
- Bob Van Schoorl			✓
Thurston Sheriff - Thor Gianesini	✓		No
Thurston Prosecuting Attorney - Ed Holm	✓		✓

Labor is the Washingrton State Labor Council on state issues candidates and the Thurston-Lewis Central Labor Council on local ones. NOW is the Washington National Organization for Women on state issues candidates only, and FV is Freedom Vote which is dedicated to guaranteeing the civil rights of all citizens

Report From The Front Lines of The Abortion War

by Mary Lou Greenberg

(Buffalo, NY — October 27, 1998)

When I and other members of the Reproductive Freedom Task Force of Refuse & Resist! arrived in Buffalo the day after Dr. Barnett Slepian was murdered, we grabbed up the local newspapers and read the accounts of what had happened. An anti-abortion assassin with a high-powered rifle hid in the back yard and took aim as the doctor sat in his kitchen with family members about 10 p.m. They had just returned from temple after an observance for his father who died a year before. The bullet crashed through into the window and into the doctor's back.

Dr. Slepian had been heavily targeted over the years. He had received many death threats and he and his family had been subjected to severe harassment. While he no longer did abortions at his clinic in Amherst, a Buffalo suburb, (which had been one of the targets during Operation Rescue's efforts to close down Buffalo clinics in 1992) he did procedures at the last remaining clinic in town, Buffalo WomenServices. Despite the threats and harassment, he was known for his continuing, outspoken support of women's right to choose.

One new thing came out at the police press conference. They revealed that they had been alerted to the danger of possible attack by a fax sent to them by Dr. Slepian's wife six hours before the deadly shooting. This fax was an alert sent to abortion providers in the U.S. and Canada a few days earlier by the National Abortion Federation, the professional association of providers. The fax had called attention to the history of attacks at this time of year, the period around November 11 (Veterans' Day in the U.S., Remembrance Day in Canada) and warned providers to take extra precautions.

If there is any one thing that demonstrates the absolute, deadly futility of any hope that the authorities will protect our clinics and providers, this should be it once and for all! It is another striking example of the cold truth that the masses of pro-choice people must rely on ourselves to protect and defend abortion providers while fighting on many fronts to change the whole reactionary political climate which encourages and produces attacks like the assassination of Dr. Slepian.

With still two more months remaining in the year, we have seen the bombing of the Birmingham abortion clinic that killed a security guard and severely wounded a nurse, Emily Lyons. We have seen the vicious lynch-like killing of James Byrd Jr. in Jasper, Texas and the brutal beating and murder of gay student Matthew Shepard in Wyoming. And now the cold-blooded, well-plotted murder of Dr. Slepian. It is truly, as R&R! says, "all one attack."

In the wake of the great loss of Dr. Slepian, what a wonderful thing it would be if doctors who do not now provide abortions would declare that they will learn to do them; if medical students in great numbers would come forward to learn how to do the procedure and demand that medical schools teach it; if people all over the country spoke out in the media to uphold the valuable work of providers and volunteered to assist their local clinics.

Contact Refuse & Resist!
305 Madison Ave., Suite 1166
New York, NY 10165
Phone: 212-713-5657
refuse@calyx.com or resist@walrus.com

This is an edited version of the original.

Thanks to Gannett and Knight-Ridder, Detroit Newspaper Workers Still Locked Out

Clint Burelson

Over 3,000 members of the American Postal Workers Union marched in the streets of Detroit recently to let the Gannett and Knight-Ridder corporations know that the struggle of the Detroit Newspaper workers was not over. As a member of the Postal Workers Union, I was in Detroit for our National Convention. The Detroit newspaper workers spoke at our convention and had a booth set up with T-shirts, buttons, and videos to support their struggle.

The newspaper workers in Detroit have been battling the giant newspaper chains for over 3 years. Although these giant corporations like to portray themselves as independent community newspapers, they are in fact similar to fast food chains except that they shrewdly change their name in each town. The Gannett corporation owns the *Detroit News, USA Today, The Olympian*, and over 90 other newspapers across the country making Gannett the largest newspaper chain in the United States. Knight-Ridder owns the *Detroit Free Press*, is 50% owner of the *Seattle Times* and owns over 20 other newspapers.

Most communities have only one corporate owned, daily newspaper in their town. The monopoly status means little competition and allows for greater profits. In Detroit, Gannett and Knight-Ridder have a Joint Operating Agreement, a legal exception to anti-trust laws that allows them to work together in putting our their papers.

The struggle first got attention when the newspaper workers went on strike in 1995 as a result of unfair labor practices committed by the corporations. Six unions, most notably the Newspaper Guild and the Teamsters, represent the newspaper workers in Detroit. After over two years on strike, the unions made an unconditional offer to return to work in the early part of 1998. Gannett and Knight-Ridder refused to bring back all of the strikers.

The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) has ruled that the Gannett and Knight-Ridder corporations violated the law in their dealings with the newspaper workers and has ordered the corporations to put the locked out union members back to work. Still, the two large media corporations have only hired a few workers back. 'Replacement workers' (scabs) still occupy jobs that rightfully belong to the union members.

According to newspaper workers in Detroit, Gannett and Knight-Ridder are misleading people into believing the conflict was over in an attempt to bring their sales back up. The 3,000 plus Postal Workers who marched through Detroit let many people know that the fight was not over.

The struggle in Detroit has larger meaning for communities across the country. What kind of news can people expect from a media corporation that treats it's workers so badly. And what about the poor coverage the story of the Detroit newspaper workers has received from Gannett and Knight-Ridder and even from other media corporations?

You can find out more about the Detroit newspaper workers and support their cause at the same time by subscribing to their weekly journal. The Sunday Journal is put out by the locked out workers and features information about their struggle as well as news around Detroit.

Subscribe to the Sunday Journal - 3 months $15 or 6 months $30 Mail a check or money order to :

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Continue the Boycott
USA Today (Gannett)
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Detroit Free Press (Knight-Ridder) •

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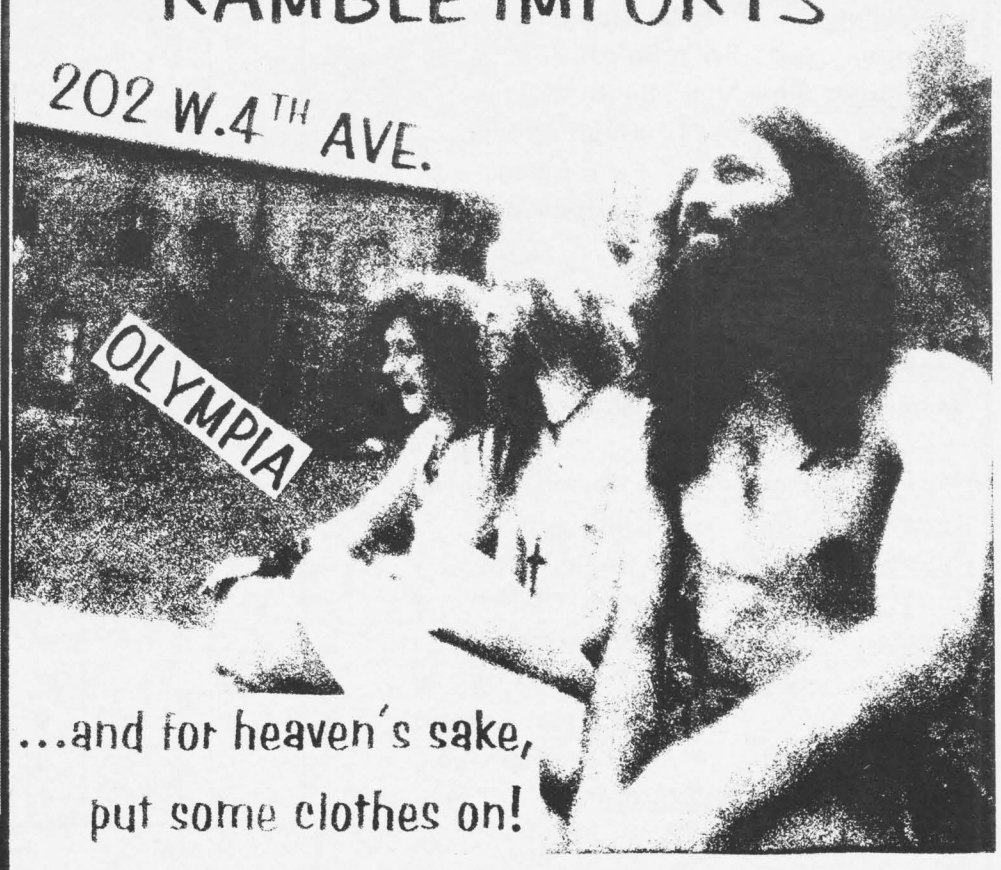

...and for heaven's sake, put some clothes on!

National Conference Builds Movement to Stop Prison Injustices

Stephanie Guilloud

A nation's prisons reflect the humanity of its people. Or so said a certain dead, white guy over one hundred years ago. One month ago in Berkeley, California 3000 people converged to say something similar. But these people, from all over the US and other parts of the world, did more than talk at the three-day long conference called Critical Resistance: Beyond the Prison Industrial Complex. With over 200 workshops and 400 presenters, participants listened to others' experiences, shared strategies to confront the prison crisis in this country, and became a part of a growing movement to resist the abuses of the criminal injustice system and the rapid prison expansion project.

The issues that surround prisons include; confronting the growing prison industry and prison slave labor, addressing gross medical neglect and the lack of educational or rehabilitation programs, freeing political prisoners, and opposing the demonization of target groups like the poor, people of color, women, and youth. To strategize along these lines has more to do with the overthrow of all forms of domination, poverty, and racist patriarchal institutions than a single issue campaign about an isolated problem. The opening plenaries of the conference reflected this radical analysis of the punishment industry in this country. Not only did diverse voices speak but they spoke without lecturing, without rhetoric, without pretense. Puerto Rican writer Piri Thomas opened with powerful poetry, and indeed poetry flowed throughout the weekend events like wildfire, ever-present and raw. Chyrstos, native woman poet, reminded us with fierce truth that we stood on stolen lands, that a higher percentage of Native Americans are incarcerated than any other racial group, and that for thousands of years before murdering colonists arrived there were no prisons. A white woman told her personal story of triumph after 25 years of heroin addiction and incarceration. 'Big Black' Smith spoke about his experience in the Attica uprising of 1971. Ramona Africa with an awesome presence challenged us to take responsibility for ourselves and asked us, 'How far are you willing to go?' I left this first two hours of the conference with burning determination and attended as many workshops as I could.

The choice was always difficult as each time slot included 20-40 presentations. The organizing committee made up of former prisoners, activists, and academics worked tirelessly to pull together a conference that grew to five times the size of their expectations. Their work should be commended and, perhaps, criticized, as well. Several groups were not represented to their satisfaction, or at all, and submitted letters or spoke up at plenaries. The magnitude of the conference, the openness of its organizers, and the amount of activity and connections made during the weekend were phenomenal.

Though the strategizing and movement building happening at the conference can hardly be called passive, organizers in the Bay Area made sure that the conference made its way out of the classrooms and into the streets. San Francisco Art and Revolution, including many Olympia activists, worked with other groups to create a giant street theater performance and march in opposition to a jail being built across the street from Berkeley High School. The jail is euphemistically called the Public Safety Building complete with an underground shooting range and a private workout gym for the cops. With about 600 people or more we took the streets with giant puppets of Mumia Abu Jamal, a political prisoner on death row, Lucia Rodriguez, a Puerto Rican political prisoner, 10 people puppets representing the targets of prisons, and 15 beautiful red birds of liberation. At the Berkeley campus the people tore down the walls of the Prison Industrial Complex setting Mumia and Lucia free, symbolically. We arrived at the site of the new jail and people began pounding the wooden fence that surrounded the construction site. The wall came down! Others painted NO JAIL across the sides while surprised police tried to clear the scene. The action was incredible, and the energy sustained itself as we walked to a nearby park and closed.

By my count, more than 10 Olympians attended the conference, and I am confident that those people are not sitting still. Shelton, the men's prison, and Purdy, the women's, are both less than two hours away, and we are all responsible for what happens inside. Books to Prisoners always needs volunteers, money donations, and book donations, so you can get involved that way. Go to the back of Bulldog News on 4th St. The Prison Action Committee located on the Evergreen State College campus provides resources and information to students and community members, as well as coordinating actions. Call 866-6000 and ask for their extension. Breaking the deadly isolation with letters is the easiest thing to do. Organizing workshops or programs for people inside is another. People in the community are former prisoners, activists, and teachers, and support for this work exists if we look for it. We must continue to educate ourselves and act as we can against the injustices that this country supports with our money and our complacency. There is work to be done both inside the walls and outside, so rise up to Ramona Africa's challenge and ask yourself how far you are willing to go to get the oppressors out of our minds and off of our necks. ●

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Examining the United States

A Pick-and-Choose Approach to Human Rights

Amnesty International

Despite its claims to international leadership in human rights the U.S.A. is failing to respect the fundamental promise of rights for all both at home and abroad, Amnesty International said as it launched its first worldwide campaign on the country's human rights situation.

"All countries, irrespective of their power or political system, have a duty to protect the rights of all their people; but across the USA, thousands are falling victim to human rights violations," said Pierre Sani, Amnesty International's Secretary General. "All too often, human rights in the U.S.A. are a tale of two nations: rich and poor, white and black, male and female."

Amnesty International's campaign will highlight abuses by U.S. police and prison officials -- often carried out with high tech repression tools like electroshock devices and chemical sprays -- of the arbitrary, unfair and racist use of the death penalty, and the growing incarceration of asylum-seekers.

At the same time, the campaign will focus attention on the USA's double standards regarding foreign policy and international human rights commitments. According to Amnesty International, the USA's role in establishing the international system of human rights protection is in marked contrast with its reluctance to submit itself to international scrutiny of its own human rights record, and to live up to the same standards that it demands from other countries.

"As the world's largest producer and exporter of arms, the U.S.A. contributes to human rights abuse by supplying equipment and training to governments and armed groups known to have carried out torture, political killings and other abuses," Mr. Sani continued.

The type of electroshock weapons produced by the U.S.A. have been used to torture victims around the world, and are now banned in some Western European countries and in Canada. Items used and exported by the U.S.A. -- like leg-irons, thumb-cuffs, electroshock weapons and pepper spray -- easily or inherently lend themselves to torture or ill-treatment.

"The U.S.A. is simply not doing enough to ensure that such equipment is not being used to commit human rights violations. Current U.S. laws and procedures are just not addressing the problem," Pierre Sani said.

A good case in point is that of Turkey, for instance, where according to reports issued by the U.S. State Department in 1995, there is "highly credible" evidence that US-supplied military equipment was used in some village evacuations involving human rights violations. Turkey's special units of paramilitary gendarmes and police -- two of the forces most frequently accused of political killings, "disappearances" and torture -- have used assault rifles, grenade launchers and helicopters obtained from the USA.

Responding to pressure, the U.S. government held up a few arms exports to Turkey in 1997, but recent reports indicate that further exports have been allowed. In April 1998, a U.S. company was negotiating to sell 10,000 electroshock weapons to the Turkish police, despite its long, well documented record of practising electroshock torture.

"Given its prominent role in the global arms market, the U.S.A. should aim for full transparency regarding all transfers, and adopt a Code of Conduct aimed at stopping torturing countries from acquiring both the technology and the know-how," Mr. Sani stressed. "Any transfer likely to contribute to human rights abuses should be immediately stopped."

Amnesty International is also highly critical of the selective approach of the U.S. government in condemning human rights violations in other countries. "The U.S. authorities are quick to criticize human rights violations in countries considered hostile, but are then unwilling to take appropriate action when abuses are committed by U.S. allies or when the USA's political or economic interests could be compromised," Mr. Sani said.

US authorities are quick to criticize human rights violations in countries considered hostile, but are then unwilling to take appropriate action when abuses are committed by US allies

The U.S. government's long standing refusal to criticize blatant human rights violations by Israel against the Palestinian population, its passivity in the face of gross human rights violations in Saudi Arabia, and the playing down by U.S. officials of the massacres in Rwanda are some examples of this.

In addition to its double standards in terms of foreign policy, the U.S.A. is also failing to deliver the promise of human rights for all to people within its own territory. According to Amnesty International, there is a dangerous trend towards the erosion of human rights in the U.S.A. -- a situation illustrated by some of the issues highlighted in a comprehensive report published to accompany the launch of the campaign:

A widespread and persistent pattern of police brutality

Police abuse is such a widespread problem in the USA, that millions of dollars are paid out every year to alleged victims. Reports of discriminatory treatment by police toward racial and ethnic minorities are common, and black people arrested for minor offences, for instance, appear particularly liable to suffer police brutality. The vast majority of complaints relate to police officers beating people during arrests, searches, traffic stops or street incidents -- especially in inner cities with large minority groups.

Many suspects in police custody have died while forced face down in restraints -- most often when being "hog-tied" with wrists and ankles tied together. While a number of police departments have now banned this method, others continue to use it.

Endemic physical and sexual violence against prisoners

The USA's current response to crime centres on the imposition of harsher punishments, and the country now has one of the largest prison populations in the world. Some of the larger prison units show a high level of inmate on inmate violence -- with guards at times inciting attacks or not acting to prevent them. Inmates have also been beaten by guards and subjected to sexual abuse, including rape -- a form of torture.

A particularly disturbing development is the growth of high-tech security units, where prisoners -- including pregnant women -- are placed in long-term or even permanent isolation. Prisoners, many of them mentally ill, are frequently placed in mechanical restrains for hours or days on end. Despite being outlawed under international standards, shackling of prisoners -- including their transportation in leg irons -- is widespread in the U.S. prison system. In some jurisdictions pregnant women have been shackled.

Not all sectors of society are equally affected by this, however. In a country still struggling to eradicate racial discrimination, over 60 per cent of prisoners come from racial minorities. Up to one third of all young black men are in jail or prison, or on parole or probation.

The death penalty - An arbitrary, unfair and racist punishment

The death penalty is now a political campaigning tool in the USA, and it is being applied in a racist way. Black

(Continued next page)

Your Help Is Needed

Because of the huge number of letters Books for Prisoners-Olympia Support Group receives each month and its limited resources, requests often wait many months to be filled. Thousands of letters still remain in boxes. Your help and generousity are urgently needed.

If we desire individuals in this country's prisons to be caring, thoughtful and sympathetic, then we too need to be caring, thoughtful and sympathetic. We need to "walk the talk." Please donate your time, money or books.

In greatest demand are:

English, Spanish/English, Southeast Asian dictionaries, thesaurus, new almanaces, and GED books.

Frequently requested are:

African-American, Chicano/Latino, and Native American history and progressive U.S. history.

Please donate:

- Any other good books
- Stamps and stamp money
- Money for tape, wrapping paper, copying

Please bring donations of books to the Books to Prisoner-Olympia office at the Liberation Cafe above Bulldog News.

Please make checks payable to Books to Prisoners.

Address: Books to Prisoners c/o Liberation Cafe, 116 4th Ave, Olympia WA 98501

Telephone: (360) 352-7336

Inmates — All correspondence to Books to Prisoners *must* go through the main branch:

Books to Prisoners
Left Bank Books
92 Pike Street
Seattle WA 98101

Books to Prisoners November Events

- **Books to Prisoners has moved to the downstairs back room at Bull Dog News.**
- **Open drop in work/training sessions every Thurs. 3-9 pm in the back of Bulldog News, 116 E. 4th, Olympia. *Training takes about 1 hour. Once you are trained you can work anytime Bulldog is open.***
- **BTP Volunteer Potluck - 3rd Sun. of the month (Nov 22nd), 3 pm at Liberation Cafe 116 E. 4th Ave, Olympia**
- **Turn in Bayview and Ralph's receipts. Please bring in or mail all the receipts you can. B to P receives 1%. Please send to the address below.**
- **Save the UPC code from Western Family Products and send to B to P, 116 E 4th Ave, Olympia, WA 98501**

Attention Prisoners

***W.I.P.* seeks articles, artwork (black and white is best) from those in prison. Please send submissions to:**

Works In Progress,
PO Box 295,
Olympia WA 98507-0295

(Human Rights, continued)

and white people are the victims of violent crime in roughly equal numbers, yet 82 per cent of people executed since 1977 have been convicted of killing white victims. Factors like aggravating circumstances cannot explain this disparity.

In violation of international standards, execution of the mentally impaired and juvenile offenders continue in the USA. In addition, at a time when there is a worrying escalation in the number of executions, many capital defendants are not receiving adequate legal representation.

Most U.S. states have now adopted execution by lethal injection, claiming that it is "more humane". But the cruelty of this punishment is inescapable, regardless of the method used, and in many cases, inmates have suffered prolonged deaths due to medical staff having trouble finding a vein to inject the poison, or through having to wait with needles in their arms while last minutes appeals were heard.

Incarceration of asylum-seekers

Growing numbers of people fleeing persecution are finding themselves behind bars after arriving in the USA. Asylum-seekers have committed no crime, yet they are often held in jails and prisons with criminal prisoners. Unlike criminal suspects, they are often denied bail and do not know when they will be released.

Asylum-seekers held in these conditions are not differentiated from other inmates

They are often held in inhumane conditions, strip searched, shackled, chained and verbally or physically abused. They are often prevented from meeting with their lawyers, interpreters and asylum organizations. Women asylum-seekers are more likely than men to be detained with criminals, and there is a lack of alternative accommodation for children -- who according to international law should be kept together with their families and never be held in detention.

Reluctance to abide by international standards

The level of human rights protection recognized in U.S. law often falls short of some of the minimum standards set down in international treaties, and important internationally recognized rights and standards are not always reflected in domestic U.S. law -- like the ban on using the death penalty against juvenile offenders. People in the U.S.A. whose rights have been violated are also being denied the possibility of recourse to international protection mechanisms.

Amnesty International will call on the U.S. authorities to put an end to their selective approach in the application of international law at home and abroad, and to adjust the country's legislation to conform with international standards.

In particular, the U.S.A. should ratify without reservations all international human rights treaties -- especially the Convention on the Eradication of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the American Convention on Human Rights -- and withdraw its reservations to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention Against Torture.

"How can a country that has so far refused to ratify international human rights treaties destined to protect the welfare of women and children, for instance, aim to set an example to the international community in the area of human rights?" Mr. Sani asked.

"How can the international community send a clear message that acts of genocide and other crimes against humanity will not be tolerated when a world-leading country like the U.S.A. is actively opposing the creation of a truly independent and effective International Criminal Court?"

Amnesty International's call for greater respect for human rights in the U.S.A. is part of a campaign to promote those rights for all people in all countries. The organization stresses that by failing to deliver to many of their people the wealth of civil and political rights guaranteed under international law -- as well as the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights -- the U.S. federal and state authorities are also failing to recognize the importance of those rights in other countries.

"The U.S.A. has little room for complacency in terms of human rights, both in terms of some sectors of U.S. society and of the country's role in the international arena," Mr. Sani explained. "It is time for the U.S. government to put an end to its selective approach to human rights, and to start to adjust its conduct and legislation to conform with international human rights principles," Mr. Sani said.

"Starting today, more than a million Amnesty International members worldwide will be calling for a renewed commitment by the U.S. authorities to placing humans rights protection at the heart of U.S. domestic and foreign policy," Pierre Sani concluded.

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The Blackman's Testament

by Corey D.C. Dedrick

I am a Blackman; the evidence of anthropology now suggests that I am the first to have ever walked this vast imponderable earth, the original man.

I am an African, an exotic angel Quintessence of universal Blackness, I have by force lost my history, I will seize it back so help me.

If need be, I will crush the four corners of earth, and surely the universe will tremble. And I will erect upon the earth, a new society of humanity to its culture core,

Till long at last, as day move into night, we will emerge, the only true human being the world has ever known.

Mr. Dedrick is currently a prisoner in the Texas D.O.C.

"While there is a
lower class I am in it,
while there is a criminal
element I am of it, While
there is a soul in prison
I am not free."
Empire
Life.

Mr. Dee Jay Still

Books To Prisoner's Special Thanks for October

• Thanks to Storman's Ralph's Thriftway and Bayview, locally owned and operated grocery stores, and all individuals who have submitted grocery receipts to Books to Prisoners. We received 1% and it really makes a difference. Last quarter we got $150. Please continue sending them in the next quarter (April 98 - December 98).

• Thank you to Bulldog News, for providing the prison art display during Artwalk, all the prisoners who provided art, volunteers who set up and cleaned up, and all the wonderful people who were touched by the display and made contributions of funds, stamps and books.

• A big thank you to Betsy Model and Kari Hamilton of the TNT for the terrific article on Books to Prisoners and photo. The response has been incredible–Pierce County Library donation, two Boy Scout groups from Tacoma, and many supportive citizens.

• Thanks to the Olympia Friends of the Library for their support and donation following their book sale.

• Thank you to all who contributed and attended the Oct 16th Poets for Prisoners Benefit. Specially spoken poets and performers: Rachel Corri, Elsbeth Perry, Ketan Anjaria, Jesse Newton, Mara Leigh, Ann Carol Mitchell, Slim Moon, Jade Crown, Nomi Lamb, Arrington, Fiori Mills, Hilary Homosex, Cortney Bennet, Molly Zuckerman, Lemur Lefagg, and Zela. Grace Cox for technical assistance, and B to P volunteers Neil, Tara, Long-haired David, and Jesse for promotion, set up and clean up. Otto's and Olympia Food Coop for donation of refreshments.

• Thank you to K Records and Calvin Johnson for inviting B to P to participate in your music and media open house extravaganza Oct 23rd.

• Thanks to Olympia Film Society for your support during the annual film festival. Many thanks to human rights filmmaker, Lee Lew Lee, for donating the use of your powerful documentation, All to the People and to presenter panelists Aaron Dixon (former Seattle chair of the Black Panther Party), Gui Kurose (Asian-Pacific Islander activist), and Skip Mahawk of the American Indian Movement).

• Much thanks to the continuing support of all the folks of *Works In Progress*.

Library Postage Rates Are Up

While first class postage rates will not be going up until after the holiday season, the library postage rate has already gone up. Additional help with funds and stamps are needed. Seven crates of books bound for prisons with the old postage rate now sit back at Books to Prisoners in Bulldog News waiting for additional stamps to meet the postage increase.

Also needed are volunteers to organize benefits. If this November is anything like last year, we will receive three times the normal amount of letters.

WORKS IN PROGRESS

NOVEMBER 1998 THURSTON COUNTY RAINBOW COALITION FREE

Scene from Critical Resistance: Beyond the Prison Industrial Complex *conference and action featuring a giant puppet of political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.*

See page 13 for article.

Hate Crimes:
What We Can Do!

Along the Color Line
The Politics Of
Black Culture

Welfare "Reform"
Blaming The Poor
For Poverty

Small Town Life
In Nicaragua

Suriname: Ethnic Pluralism
Under Pressure

Amnesty International
Report On The U.S.A.

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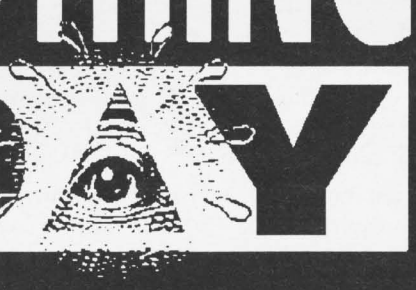

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